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Recent Ethnographic Research on North American Indigenous Peoples

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Abstract

This review article addresses the following question: Given the transformed social, political, and intellectual conditions for ethnographic research among indigenous peoples in North America, what forms has such research come to take at the turn of the twenty-first century? The review considers significant trends and innovations in research sites and topics, research methodologies, theoretical orientations, and forms of representation. It also assesses the distinctive strengths and limitations posed by ethnographic research for scholars engaging with significant dimensions of contemporary indigenous life, including struggles for rights, resources, recognition, and language vitality in both the national and international arenas; the repatriation and sovereignty movements; the development of tribal casinos, tourist complexes, cultural centers, and media outlets; continued social and economic marginalization of many indigenous peoples; and challenges posed by neoliberalism and globalization to tribal governments and economies.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a vital moment for ethnographic research on indigenous people in North America. In the year 2002 alone appeared excellent full-length ethnographies on Cherokee identity (Sturm 2002) and the Cherokee syllabary (Bender 2002), Yurok spirituality (Buckley 2002), Makah cultural revitalization (Erickson et al. 2002), Northern Athabascan women (Fast 2002), Cheyenne-Arapaho politics (Fowler 2002), Kwakiutl art (Jacknis 2002), Navajo education (McCarty 2002), and Ojibwe spearfishing (Nesper 2002), among others. The previous and following years saw the publication of ethnographies on Arapaho world view and ritual (Anderson 2001), Alaskan Indian politics and religion (Dombrowski 2001), Coast Salish traditional law (Miller 2001), Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara women (Berman 2003), Yuchi religion (Jackson 2003), female Navajo ceremonial practitioners (Schwarz et al. 2003), Northern Dene constructions of reality (Sharp 2001), and Lumbee and Tuscarora history (Sider 2003), among others. Summarized in these terms, the continuities of these ethnographies with past research on Native Americans is striking: All are localized treatments of some aspect of Native American language, culture, politics, or history. But these same ethnographies may also be characterized as innovative case studies of social processes such as domination and resistance, dependency and sovereignty, cultural production and transformation, and self-determination and self-representation.

This review is less concerned with continuities in ethnographic research among Native Americans than with those contemporary trends and innovations that reflect both Native realities and scholarly preoccupations. Other commentaries have emphasized the continued value and influence of the Boasian (or Americanist) tradition of ethnographic research, particularly in that tradition's engagement with Native American languages, histories, cultural forms, and modes of creativity (Bunzl 2004, Kan & Strong 2006, Valentine & Darnell 1999, Whiteley 2004). This renewed emphasis on the value of the Boasian tradition has occurred in the context of sustained critique from both inside and outside the discipline (Bauman & Briggs 2003, Biolsi & Zimmerman 1997, Segal & Yanagisako 2005, Strong 2004, Whiteley 1998). These critical assessments are leading to significant changes in ethnographic research and writing, though not to a retreat from ethnographic research altogether, as some predicted.

Anthropologists and Indians, an important volume edited by Biolsi & Zimmerman (1997), explores the impact of Native American critiques of anthropology and increased tribal control of research on ethnographers who conducted research in the wake of V. Deloria's landmark satire, "Anthropologists and Other Friends" (1969). Deloria's polemic, together with the internal appraisals published in Hymes's *Reinventing Anthropology* (1972), offered early versions of what would come to be called the critiques of "ethnographic authority" (Clifford 1988) and "colonial representation" (Said 1989). *Anthropologists and Indians* and other recent works have emphasized the emergence of native ethnographies, collaborative research methods, and reflexive and dialogical writing styles in response to these critiques (Brody 2001; Cruikshank 1990; Field 1999; Kan 2001; Lassiter 2000, 2001; McBeth 1998; Medicine 2001; Smith 1999; Whiteley 2004). Other scholarship has pointed to the seeds of these new developments in the Boasian tradition itself, particularly when its more marginalized scholars

and consultants are taken into account (Behar & Gordon 1995, Bunzl 2004, Kan & Strong 2006, Liberty 1976, Visweswaran 1995). Most recently, Biolsi's (2004a) excellent *Companion to the Anthropology of American Indians* assesses contemporary ethnographic research, writing, and film in relation to Native American Studies and other scholarly enterprises.

Given the robust critical scholarship on ethnographic research among Native Americans, it seems appropriate to direct the present review to a rather specific question: Given the transformed social, political, and intellectual conditions for ethnographic research among indigenous peoples in North America, what forms has such research come to take at the turn of the twenty-first century? (This period is roughly defined as the decade between 1995 and 2004.) In the context of an analysis of current conditions for conducting ethnographic research, I consider significant trends and innovations in research sites and topics, research methodologies, theoretical orientations, and forms of representation. I also assess the distinctive strengths and limitations posed by ethnographic research for scholars engaging with significant dimensions of contemporary indigenous life, including struggles for rights, resources, recognition, and language vitality in both the national and international arenas; the repatriation and sovereignty movements; the development of tribal casinos, tourist complexes, cultural centers, and media outlets; continued social and economic marginalization of many indigenous peoples; and challenges posed by neoliberalism and globalization to tribal governments and economies.

Owing to its focus on ethnographic research and writing, this review does not consider ethnohistorical research (but see Deloria & Salisbury 2002, Strong 1996), textual analysis (Frey 2004, Tedlock 1983, Wiget 1994), comparative (ethnological) syntheses (Biolsi 2004a, Demallie & Ortiz 1994, Sturtevant 1976–2004), or critiques of representation (Strong 2004), except where such work has a significant ethnographic component. Space

constraints have often required me to illustrate a point with one or two exemplary works chosen from a range of possibilities, with that range indicated by a list of representative citations (generally to books rather than articles, although much ethnographic research first appears in anthropology or Native American studies journals). Although North America includes Mexico, and the United States includes Hawai'i, the extensive literature on the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Hawai'i cannot be considered here, except where the research itself is explicitly transnational—as, for example, in research on transnational indigenous movements (Jensen 2003, Miller 2003, Niezen 2003). There is a pressing need to integrate contemporary ethnographic research on indigenous people across the U.S./Mexico border and in Hawai'i into a broad comparative framework—as, for example, Spicer (1967) and Brooks (2002a) have done for the ethnohistory of the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. However, such an integration is not a reality but one of the horizons to which this review points (but see Cook & Lindau 2000, Edmunds 2002, Kapur 2004, Menchaca 2001, Perry 1996, Sheridan & Parezo 1996).

The foregoing might suggest that it is actually rather early to assess “ethnographic research on North American indigenous peoples” (a title suggested by the theme of this *Annual Review*). The designation “indigenous peoples” is a relatively new one in the United States and Canada, where it indicates an identity connected to an emerging global movement (Niezen 2003). This designation is not an identity shared by all Native peoples of North America; indeed, most of the research considered here concerns peoples whose primary sense of collective identity is local—on the level of the community, tribe, or Native nation. Research into the emergence of indigenous identities and their relationship to local identities, on the one hand, and processes of globalization, on the other, is still in its initial stages, and much of this research is legal or historical rather than ethnographic (Anaya

1996, Barsh 1983, Hanson 2004, Morris 1992, Muehlebach 2001, Smith & Ward 2000). Therefore, most of the scholarship considered in this review fits more comfortably within the designation “ethnography of North American Indians/Native Americans/First Nations.” I conclude, however, with a brief discussion of forward-looking ethnographic research on indigenous identities, struggles, and projects.

SITES, METHODOLOGIES, AND THEMES OF RECENT ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

In both the United States and Canada ethnographic research on reservations has increasingly come under the control of tribal governments. Indigenous peoples such as the Navajo Nation that have hosted generations of anthropologists have developed their own Institutional Review Boards (for one example, see Frisbie 2001, pp. xxxvi–xxxix); other groups control ethnographic research through tribal councils or tribal research centers. Some indigenous groups seek to restrict research on religious topics (Bucko 2004); others direct researchers toward problems of local concern (Field 2004, Lomawaima 2000). These changes in the conditions for ethnographic research have led some researchers to conduct what Fogelson (2001, p. x) calls an “anthropology of mutual engagement” (see, for example, Foley 1995), whereas others have conducted the more problem-oriented research that Field (2004, p. 472) calls “applications of anthropological tools in Indian Country to accomplish tribal goals.”

The hallmark of traditional ethnographic research has been intensive, long-term participant-observation in a local community. This remains a significant mode of research, although today participant-observation often takes place in institutional settings such as tribal schools, museums, cultural centers, casinos, and tourist complexes (Bender 2002, Bodinger de Uriarte 2003, Cattelino 2004, Erickson 2002, Jacknis 2002, Karson 2005, Mason 2000, May 2001, McCarty 2002,

Nesper 2003). This shift is due in part to indigenous preferences: These institutions have come to serve as mediators between indigenous communities and the outside world, and they are sites in which scholars can contribute to community-based research without intruding on private life. At the same time, such institutions are ideal for the study of processes of self-representation, self-determination, repatriation, and economic development—hence an efflorescence of studies on these topics, some of which take the form of collaborative self-representations (Fienup-Riordan 1996, Fienup-Riordan et al. 2000). McCarty’s *A Place to Be Navajo* (2002) is an ethnography of the pathbreaking Rough Rock School from the perspective of critical education theory. Critical museum studies has generated several ethnographies on tribal cultural centers, including *Voices of a Thousand People* (Erickson et al. 2002), a collaborative ethnography on the Makah Cultural and Research Center that focuses on “indigenizing the museum” (p. 172), and *The Storage Box of Tradition*, a historical ethnography on the collecting, renaissance, and repatriation of Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl) art over two centuries (Jacknis 2002; see also Clifford 1998, 2004; Dobkins 2004; Karson 2005; U’mista 1983; Webster 1992).

It has also become increasingly common for ethnographic research to be situated in governmental institutions, including tribal offices, courts, and social service agencies. Ethnographic research in these settings often relies at least as much on formal interviews and archival research as it does on participant-observation. Among the central themes of these ethnographies are the articulation of tribal politics with the regional, national, and global political economy (Biolsi 2001, Clemmer 1995, Faiman-Silva 1997, Fowler 2002, Hanson 2004, Sider 2003); political divisions within and alliances between indigenous communities (Dombrowski 2001, Fowler 2002, Nesper 2003, Sider 2003); racial politics within indigenous communities and between them and surrounding non-Indian

communities (Biolsi 2001; Blu 1996, 2001; Foley 1995; Nesper 2002; Sider 2003; Sturm 2002); and the complex intersection of governing and judicial bodies in tribal communities (Biolsi 2001; Brown 2001, 2004; Miller 2001). Sovereignty, the politics of identity, and the federal recognition and acknowledgment processes have emerged as central themes in this literature, and several scholars have discussed the role anthropologists play as researchers for tribes in their recognition, acknowledgment, and repatriation efforts (Campisi 1991; Clifford 1988; Field 1999, 2004; Fine-Dare 2002; Sider 2003). *Blessing for a Long Time: The Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe* (Ridington & Hastings 1997) is a prize-winning collaborative ethnography on the repatriation of U'mon'hon'ti (Venerable Man), the Omaha sacred pole, from the Peabody Museum, where he was deposited through the efforts of anthropologist Alice Fletcher and her Omaha collaborator, Francis La Flesche. Similar to an influential article on the repatriation of sacred objects to Zuni Pueblo from the Smithsonian Institution (Merrill et al. 1993), *Blessing for a Long Time* chronicles the changing nature of ethnography and its relationship to indigenous peoples and projects. Reflexive ethnographic writing, derided by some as navel-gazing, has proved to be a useful technique for disciplinary self-examination.

Recent political ethnographies have also offered significant critical analyses of the challenges indigenous people, governments, and enterprises face in the pursuit of survival, sovereignty, self-determination, and recognition (Biolsi 2004b, Brody 2001, Brown 2004, Hanson 2004, Miller 2003, Pickering 2000). Sider's *Living Indian Histories: The Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina* (2003), an updated edition of an influential 1993 book, is based on episodic participation in various civil rights, economic, and legal struggles during more than three decades. *Living Indian Histories* focuses on the social differentiation and inequalities produced through the search for

tribal sovereignty as defined by the federal government: for example, a well-defined tribal role, territory, culture, history, and identity. Sider also analyzes the dependency of tribal governments and programs on federal funding and policies, as well as the pressure that exists on these governments to provide the increasing array of services expected of them in the context of neoliberalism. He contrasts an official path to sovereignty, as taken by the Lumbees, with the more autonomous path taken by the Tuscaroras. In its theoretical orientation, historical grounding, comparative scope, reliance on decades of participant observation, and consideration of broad trends in political economy, *Living Indian Histories* is a particularly important ethnography.

Dombrowski (2001) considers similar issues in *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska*, which explores the important question of how Tlingits and Haidas live "within and against culture," i.e., either identifying themselves with what is now taken to be traditional culture or opposing it from the stance of Christian fundamentalism. Dombrowski attributes contemporary tensions over Christianity to the strain placed on subsistence-based culture by the Native corporations established through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Whereas his attention to such strains makes Dombrowski's work a significant addition to the scanty literature on the impact of federal legislation on Native groups (see Brown 2004, Fowler 2004), another recent work, Kan's *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (1999), offers a treatment of Tlingit Christianity with much greater time depth. That the difference between these works is in part due to the authors' different theoretical groundings—political economy versus symbolic and historical anthropology—suggests what might be accomplished by bringing these perspectives together in future work. Dombrowski's study might also be usefully compared with Fowler's ethnohistory

of Cheyenne-Arapaho politics (2002), which contrasts conflict and hegemonic individualism in the tribal government with cooperative and counter-hegemonic discourse in powwow activities.

Another notable contribution to the literature on the politics of culture is Sturm's *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (2002). This well-written ethnography uses a distinctive "southern storytelling aesthetic" (p. xvii) to consider the sensitive topic of racial politics among a multiracial Native American group (see also Brooks 2002b). Sturm offers a historically grounded analysis of changes in Cherokee conceptions of identity over three centuries, concluding with an analysis of the contemporary marginalization of the Cherokee Freedmen (descendants of Africans enslaved or incorporated by Cherokees; see Strong 2002). Sturm's work joins Sider's *Living Indian Histories* and Foley's *The Heartland Chronicles* (1995) as one of the few recent ethnographies of racial politics among Native Americans. Foley's ethnography, like Sturm's, has a strong ethnographic voice—in Foley's case the voice of an ethnographer returning to his home town, Tama, Iowa, to better understand the relationship between Whites like himself and the Mesquakies. Because Tama was the center of Sol Tax's action anthropology (Field 2004, Foley 1999), Foley's reflexive ethnography, like *Blessing for a Long Time*, is also important for the history of anthropology.

The politics of culture and identity is a broad and productive framework (Dombrowski 2004, Harmon 2002). Notable among the many recent ethnographies on this theme is Bender's *Signs of Cherokee Culture: Sequoyah's Syllabary in Eastern Cherokee Life* (2002). Grounded in research in a literacy program and contextualized in terms of the tourist economy in which the eastern Cherokee participate, this ethnography of communication explores the role the Cherokee syllabary plays among the eastern Cherokee as a sign of cultural distinctiveness

and vitality. Another significant ethnography of literacy is Valentine's *Making It Their Own* (1995), which analyzes forms of speaking (including mediated speech) and writing (including syllabics) in a remote community in northwestern Ontario in which every community member speaks Ojibwe.

No review of recent ethnographic research would be complete without mention of three complex and influential ethnographic works grounded in language: Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (1996), Collins's *Understanding Tolowa Histories: Western Hegemonies and Native American Responses* (1998), and Cruikshank's *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (1998). All are concerned with language, place, indigenous knowledge, and identity, and all push ethnographic research in productive new directions. An exposition of how Apache wisdom and experiences involve an intimate knowledge of place names and stories attached to place, Basso's prize-winning ethnography exemplifies the importance of grounding ethnographic research in Native languages, the value of long-term ethnographic research, and the significance of attending closely to indigenous forms of knowledge and experience. *Understanding Tolowa Histories* views Native American discourses on place in a more explicitly political light, calling attention to the efforts of the Tolowa, an Athabaskan people of northern California, to maintain their language and lay claim to their lands through place names, narratives, songs, and the bureaucratic technologies of mapping, testimony, and petitions. *The Social Life of Stories*, also concerning northern Athabaskans, explores various contexts in which indigenous knowledge is expressed through storytelling, including contemporary innovations such as storytelling festivals. Other valuable ethnographies of indigenous ways of knowing include Anderson's (2001) and Schwarz's (1997) ethnographies of Northern Arapaho and Navajo personhood, Goulet's phenomenological *Ways of Knowing:*

Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Dene Tha (1998), and Sharp's evocative personal narrative, *Loon: Memory, Meaning, and Reality in a Northern Dene Community* (2001).

The analysis of popular music is at the center of Samuels's *Putting a Song On Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation* (2004). Samuels's ethnography differs from Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* in its focus on ambiguous contemporary identities rather than on traditional ones but is no less grounded in long-term relationships with Apache consultants and the close analysis of discourse and performance. *Putting a Song On Top of It* stands with Lassiter's (1998) reflexive ethnography of Kiowa powwows and gourd dancing as an important contribution to the study of indigenous music, but in offering an account of Apache popular music Samuels also joins historian P. Deloria (2004) in calling attention to "Indians in unexpected places." Future ethnographies would do well to cultivate this notion, as Peterson (2005) does in his ethnography of Navajo uses of the internet and other communication technologies.

Another important body of ethnographic literature concerns gender roles and sexuality among indigenous peoples (Bell 2002, Epple 1998, Jacobs et al. 1997, Medicine 2001, Roscoe 1998, Williams 1986). Research on sexuality is grounded in contemporary theories of the cultural production of gender, and much of it has been conducted by or in close collaboration with Native individuals identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, or "two-spirited." Likewise influenced by gender theory is the recent ethnographic literature on Native American women, including Medicine's autoethnographic collection, *Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining "Native"* (2001), recent ethnographies by Berman (2003), Fast (2003), and Schwarz et al. (2003), and a collaborative life history edited by Frisbie, *Tall Woman* (Mitchell 2001). These represent several directions in contemporary research on women: Berman's policy-oriented ethnography focuses on the economic and ceremonial roles of Mandan,

Hidatsa, and Arikara women, whereas Fast's *Northern Athabascan Survival* considers indigenous women's issues, including sexual abuse and alcohol addiction. A companion to *Navajo Blessingway Singer*, a life history of Rose Mitchell's husband Frank Mitchell (1978), *Tall Woman* chronicles the role of colonialism in transforming Navajo women's lives. Another collaborative work by Schwartz et al. (2003) centers on Navajo women ceremonial practitioners, who have previously received little attention in the ethnographic literature.

Several excellent major works on Native American spiritual and ceremonial life have appeared in recent years, all produced in close collaboration with Native practitioners. Buckley's *Standing Ground* (2002) is the culmination of decades of research on Yurok spirituality and is presented as part of an ongoing dialogue between Christian and non-Christian spirituality, Yuroks and non-Yuroks, elites and ordinary people, life and death, and religion and politics. This ethnography also features a critical engagement with Kroeber's work on northern California. Jackson's *Yuchi Ceremonial Life* (2003) analyzes the ceremonial round and oratory of contemporary Yuchis, emphasizing ritual expressions of reciprocity and harmony. Bucko's *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge* (1998) discusses the sweat lodge as a living tradition and contested practice, whereas Waldram's *The Way of the Pipe* (1997) considers the use of the sweat lodge and other Native rituals in Canadian prisons.

Among the most promising new directions in ethnographic research is research on indigenous movements, ranging from the local to the national and international levels. Nagel's (1996) pathbreaking sociology of Red Power has been joined recently by ethnographies focusing on conflict over land, resources, and representation, including Brody's *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World* (2001), Nesper's *The Walleye War: The Struggle for Ojibwe Spearfishing and Treaty Rights* (2002), Niezen's *Defending the Land:*

Sovereignty and Forest Life in James Bay Cree Society (1998), and a collaborative work by Freeman et al. (1998) on *Inuit, Whaling, and Sustainability*. In a somewhat different vein are two anthologies on opposition to Native American sports mascots (King 2004, King & Springwood 2001). Following activists to the international arena, Niezen's *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (2003) and Miller's *Invisible Indigenes: The Politics of Non-Recognition* (2003) are on the forefront of the emerging multisited research on the indigenous rights movement. Another significant research area concerns Native struggles for survival and community healing in the face of poverty (Berman 2003, Fast 2002, Pickering 2000), trauma and depression (O'Neill 1996, Waldram 1997), incarceration (Grobsmith 1994, Waldram 1997), pollution, relocation, and urbanization (Lobo & Peters 2001, Shkilnyk 1985, Schwarz 2001, Straus & Arndt 1998), and sexual abuse and addiction (Fast 2002). Warry (1998) offers an optimistic assessment of the promise of self-governance as a form of community healing.

TOWARD AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Decolonizing Methodologies, in which Maori Studies scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith sets an agenda for research on indigenous peoples, enumerates some two dozen "indigenous projects," most of which involve various ways of empowering and healing indigenous communities (Smith 1999, pp. 142–62). Although *Decolonizing Methodologies* is directed toward indigenous researchers in particular, Smith's categories are useful for assessing the extent to which anthropologists have heeded V. Deloria's warning about the disparity between ethnographic research and indigenous concerns.

Some of the indigenous projects Smith advocates are closely related to long-standing ethnographic concerns as well as to contemporary research interests, for example,

the projects of "testimony" and "storytelling" (Basso 1996; Cruikshank 1990, 1998; Horne & McBeth 1998; Mitchell 2001; Sarris 1997). "Celebrating survival" is considered in many ethnographies of religion and ritual (Buckley 2002, Jackson 2003), whereas "revitalizing," long a concern of ethnographies of religion (Harkin 2004), has more recently been extended to studies of language (Collins 1998) and politics (Warry 1998). The projects of "indigenizing" and "naming," with their emphases on indigenous world views, are also served well by some contemporary ethnographies, notably the work of Basso (1996) and Collins (1998). An emphasis on the relationship between the past and present makes some work in historical ethnography supportive of the project of "remembering" as defined by Smith (Harkin 1998, Jacknis 2002, Kan 1999, Sider 2003).

In addition to continuing traditional ethnographic concerns such as world view, narrative, life history, revitalization, and culture history, contemporary ethnographic research has developed in several new directions that articulate well with indigenous projects. "Claiming," "returning," "restoring," and "protecting" are central to recent ethnographic works on land claims (Collins 1998, Niezen 1998), treaty rights (Nesper 2002), human rights (Niezen 2003), repatriation (Erickson et al. 2002, Jacknis 2002, Karson 2005, Ridington & Hastings 1997), cultural and intellectual property (Berman 2004, Coombe 1998), and community healing (Fast 2002, Warry 1998). "Intervening" is central to many of these same works and other activist ethnographies (Ridington & Hastings 1997, Sider 2003). "Connecting," with its emphasis on establishing good relations, is a project considered in Berman's (2003) ethnography of ceremonial relations of production among Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara women as well as Anderson's (2001) and Bucko's (1998) ethnographies of ritual and world view. The project of "representing" (in the sense of self-representation) is most central to

ethnographies concerned with indigenous cultural centers (Bodinger de Uriarte 2003, Erickson et al. 2002, Fienup-Riordan et al. 2000, Jacknis 2002, Karson 2005) and media (Ginsburg 1995, 2002; Leuthold 1998; Prins 2002, 2004), whereas “creating” is considered in ethnographic research on music, powwows, poetry, and other expressive forms (Lassiter 1998, Samuels 2004, Webster 2004). The project of “gendering” is, of course, expressed in the growing number of ethnographies on Native American women (Berman 2003, Fast 2003, Horne & McBeth 1998, Mitchell 2001, Sarris 1994, Schwarz et al. 2003) as well as those on gender variance (Roscoe 1998, Jacobs et al. 1997, Williams 1992). “Democratizing” and “negotiating” are considered in some of the work focusing on indigenous social differentiation, governance, sovereignty, and Native law (Dombrowski 2001, Fowler 2002, Miller 2001, Sider 2003, Sturm 2002, Warry 1998). Finally, “networking” is key to scholars concerned with the emergence of tribal, pan-Indian, and global indigenous movements, including those making use of the Internet (Jensen 2003; Landzelius 2002, 2006; Miller 2003; Nagel 1996; Niezen 2003; Peterson 2005).

At first glance, the remaining indigenous projects are somewhat more difficult to locate in particular ethnographic works. Many ethnographers participate in “reframing,” but it is perhaps best exemplified in those ethnographies that offer a distinctly indigenous view of landscape (Basso 1996) or experience (Sharp 2001). “Reading” (as in re-reading) and “writing” are projects cultivated more in literary scholarship (e.g., Sarris 1993, Wiget 1994), but discourse-centered anthropologists such as Valentine (1995), Bender (2002), Peterson (2005), and Webster (2004) have offered significant ethnographic treatments of contemporary developments. “Discovery” and “sharing” refer to the expansion of indigenous knowledge and are probably best represented in ethnographies of indigenous education (McCarty 2002) and media (Ginsburg 1995, 2002; Leuthold 1998; Prins 2002,

2004). Smith’s last project, “envisioning,” takes the form of an ethnographic interest in prophecy (Cruikshank 1998, Geertz 1994) as well as the rare works focused on community healing (Fast 2002, Warry 1998).

More than in the past, there is a significant convergence between ethnographic and indigenous projects. Although there are still far too few native ethnographies (but see Lomawaima 2000, Medicine 2001, Thomas 1997), there is much greater attention to acknowledging the contributions of indigenous collaborators, sometimes taking the form of co-authored works or chapters (Cruikshank 1990, Erickson et al. 2002, Fienup-Riordan et al. 2000, Horne & McBeth 1998, Lassiter et al. 2002, Mitchell 2001, Ridington & Hastings 1997, Whiteley 1998). Some ethnographies now include significant critiques of previous research (Buckley 2002, Foley 1995, Ridington & Hastings 1997, Sarris 1993, Whiteley 1998), and many include a strong reflexive voice, which invites the reader to ponder and evaluate the social contexts in which ethnographic knowledge is produced (Brody 2001; Foley 1995; Goulet 1998; Lassiter 1998; Ridington & Hastings 1997; Samuels 2004; Sarris 1993, 1994; Sturm 2002; Tedlock 1992). Many recent ethnographies continue the Boasian tradition of ethnographic, linguistic, and historical research, but there has been a significant and salutary infusion of perspectives from political economy, critical race theory, and cultural and ethnic studies (Berman 2003, Biolsi 2001, Collins 1998, Dombrowski 2001, Faiman-Silva 1997, Foley 1995, King 2004, Miller 2001, Moore 1993, Pickering 2000, Sider 2003, Sturm 2002). The ethnography of contemporary indigenous identities, struggles, and movements is an exciting development that requires multi-sited and comparative research—although one hopes this is not at the expense of the strong sense of place, lived experience, and intercultural dialogue that makes today’s ethnographic writing so vital and distinctive.

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